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IV.—NOTES ON SOME OF THE ANCIENT VILLAGES IN THE ARAN ISLES,
COUNTY OF GALWAY. By G. HENRY KINAHAN, F. R. G. S. I.

[Read December 10, 1866.]

DURING a recent visit to the Islands of Aran, in Galway Bay, I remarked some ancient habitations, a few only of which are engraved on the Ordnance Map; and, as I believe they have not been previously described, it may be as well to record them.

BAILLA-NA-SEAN (*Anglice*, Village of the Ancient Ones).—Having heard from the Rev. W. Kilbride, Vicar of Aran, that a village was supposed to exist near the centre of Inishmore (the North Island of Aran), we went to look for it, and found its site about a mile N.W. of the Light House.* Generally speaking, only the foundations of the ruins remain; but after our examination we came to the conclusion that the village consisted of *Doons*; *Cahers*; *Cloghauns*, or stone cells with “beehive” or arched stone roofs; *Cnocāns* (pronounced knockauns), or beehive stone cells covered with clay; *Fosleac* (pronounced Fusleāk), or cells built of flagstones placed on edge, and roofed with flags; and *Ointigh* (pronounced On-tee), or stone huts that have not arched stone roofs.

The *Ointighs* seem to be the most recent, as they approach in type to the modern cabin. Most of the *Cloghauns* are of a similar type to those on the Great Skellig, county of Kerry, viz., they have rectangular bases, which rise a few feet above the surface before they slope in to form the “beehive roof.” The *Cloghauns* on the Great Skellig are supposed to have been built by the monks, and therefore the rectangular *Cloghauns* on Aran may also be of Christian origin, and more modern than the *Cnocāns*. Moreover, the rectangular *Cloghauns* have two doorways, similar to the cabins of the present day, while in none of the circular *Cloghauns* or in the *Cnocāns* was more than one observed.

In none of these ancient ruins was mortar apparent; but this may not be a test of antiquity, as in most of the old Cyclopean churches on the island, and in some of those which are more modern, no mortar was used. This is easily accounted for, when we remember that on these islands, as well as in the barony of Burren, county of Clare, fuel for the manufacture of lime has always been scarce and costly, and the people at the present day generally build their houses with dry walls. On referring to the accompanying Map (*see* Map, Plate I.), the position of the different old buildings will be apparent.†

* The easiest way to get to this village is along the boreen at the Roman Catholic chapel. This lane, or rather bridle path, leads into its southern part. As the name *Cloghaun* seems to be used for every kind of ancient mortarless stone house, I have used in this paper Mr. Kilbride's names, which indicate the peculiar structure of each kind of building.

† The numbers on the various ruins are in the order in which we visited them. These numbers are retained, although not in regular succession, because they are the numbers on Mr. Kilbride's Map.

No. 1. (*see* Plate II., fig. *a*).—A rectangular Cloghaun, 21 feet long, by 12 feet wide. The walls are 3 feet thick, and inside the corners are square for a height of 3 feet; above that height the stones are laid transverse to the angle, and made to overlap one above the other to form the beehive roof, (*see* Plate IV., fig. *h*).—There are two doorways to the Cloghaun, one in each side wall, and thus facing to the N. N. E. and S. S. W.; they are about 3 feet high, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide on the outside, narrowing within to about 2·5 feet.

No. 2. This is supposed to be an Ointigh. It may not have had a stone roof, and certainly never had the "beehive roof" of a Cloghaun.*

No. 3. A circular ruin, 10 feet in diameter; possibly a Cloghaun.

No. 4. Ruin of a Cloghaun, of the same type as No. 1.

No. 5. A group of three mounds, which appear to be the relics of a compound Cnocān (*see* No. 16).

No. 6. A small stone fort, about 70 feet in diameter. This was formerly surrounded by a stone wall, about 8 feet thick, in which was a flagged rectangular doorway, 3 feet high, by 3 feet 5 inches wide, facing to the S. E.

No. 7. A Fosleac, or rectangular chamber, built of six large flags placed on edge (*see* Plate III., fig. *b*): it is 8 feet long, by 3·5 feet wide, and about 4 feet high.

No. 8. A group of three mounds, similar to No. 5 (*see* No. 16).

No. 9. Two Cnocāns that have been dismantled, and the ruins of the cells exposed. These cells were circular, 24 feet in diameter, and seem to have been of a regular beehive shape. The walls are faced with a single layer of stone, backed with clay; and at their base, on the inside, were circles of flagstones placed on edge. Fig. *c*. Plate I., is the ground plan of a Cnocān of a similar type.

No. 10. (*see* Plate II., fig. *c*). A Cnocān of a similar type to those just mentioned (No 9). The inside circle of this is 15 feet in diameter; and around this, outside the clay backing, there is a circle, 27 feet in diameter, of flagstones placed on edge.

No. 11. (*see* Plate III., fig. *d*). A rectangular Cnocān, divided into two chambers. It seems to have had only one doorway, facing to the south.

No. 12. Ruin of a circular Cloghaun.

No. 13. Stone and clay circle, 18 feet in the diameter; it seems to be the ruins of a Cnocān.

No. 14. (*see* Plate V., fig. *g*). Ruined mound, with part of a circular chamber 21 feet in diameter. Extending towards the east from this chamber there is a passage, 18 feet long, 4 feet wide, and 3 feet high, covered by large flags. Contiguous to the chamber, on the S. E. is a circle of stones, 21 feet in diameter; these seem to be the ruins of a large chambered Cnocān.

* In the neighbourhood of this there seem to be the remains of a kitchen midden, and a recent potato garden. This structure may, therefore, be comparatively modern.

No. 15. Ruin of a Cnocān, of a similar type to No. 11, except that it does not appear to have been divided into chambers (*see* Plate III., fig. *d*).

No. 16. (*see* Plate IV., fig. *e*). A chambered Cnocān. The chamber at the entrance is an oval, 15 feet long, by 8 feet wide, at the S. E. end of which is the entrance passage, 3 feet square on the outside, and narrowing in width to 2·75 feet on the inside. At the N. W. of the chamber is a passage, 3 feet square, leading into a circular chamber, 12 feet in diameter. From this circular chamber there is another passage, 15 feet long, by 4 wide, 3·5 high, leading into the innermost chamber, which is also circular, and 12 feet in diameter.

All these chambers are surrounded internally by flags, backed with rubble masonry, and faced externally with clay. At each side of the entrance the external clay wall is faced with flags. The two groups of mounds before mentioned (Nos. 5 and 8) would seem to be Cnocāns of this type; for at both those places there are three mounds, two of which join into one another; and the other, which is a little apart, is connected to them by a low ridge, which may indicate the site of the connecting passage.

No. 17. Ruined Cnocān.

No. 18. Ruined Cnocān.

No. 19. Ruins of two Fosleac and two Ointigh. The largest Fosleac (*see* Plate III., fig. *f*) is 30 feet long, 6 feet wide, and about 4 feet high; it seems to have been covered by large flags. Attached to it on the N. W. side is a small rectangular chamber.

No. 20. A Cloghaun of the same type as No. 1. It is marked on the Ordnance Map, and called Creg-a-blughaun. This is the most perfect example of its type at the locality, as a portion of the roof is still seen to rise above the perpendicular walls. There are two doorways to this building—one facing north, and the other south, that are three feet high, 2·5 feet wide on the outside, and 1·75 feet on the inside. At the N. E. of the chamber there is a window, 1 foot square, and 3 feet from the ground; the chamber is 16 feet long, by 8 feet wide.

No. 21. Ruined Cnocān.

No. 22. This may be the ruin of an Ointigh; but it seems to be of modern construction. On the Ordnance Map it is marked, and called Ballynamought (*Anglice*, Village of the Poor). It is 27 feet long, by 16 feet wide, and has north and south high doorways, 2 feet wide, and a fireplace at the east end.

No. 23. Three circular Cnocāns—these occur on the hill, south of the hamlet called Ballynacragga, a little north of the trigonometrical point 400. They lie in a line contiguous to one another, and seem to be the remains of a chambered Cnocān.

No. 24. On the crest of the hill, due south of the village called Cowrugh, there is a round and flat heap of stones, which seem to be the ruins of a cluster of huts. Mr. Kilbride considers this to be the ruins of a Cœnobium of a colony of monks.

No. 25. Ruins of two Cloghauns, of a similar type to No. 1. The

most northern of these is marked on the Ordnance Map, and called Cloghaun-a-phuca; part of the roof of the latter remains.

No. 26. A little S. W. of Cloghaun-a-phuca there is the ruin of a Cashel of about 60 feet in diameter. This seems to be of quite a different style of building to the Duns or Doons for which the Islands of Aran are famous; and it is considered by Mr. Kilbride to be of a much more recent construction.

No. 27. Fosleac, or perhaps more correctly *Ligaitreabh*, or pillar-dwelling. This is marked on the Ordnance Map, and called Dermot and Grania's Bed.

No. 28. Ruin of a large Doon of an oval shape, its diameters being 220 and 110 feet; this is called by the inhabitants "The Doon."

No. 29. A little N. W. of "The Doon" are two mounds, and the remains of a circular chamber apparently the ruin of a three-chambered Cnocán of a similar type to No. 16. Contiguous to them we found half a "*Bullaun*," or stone basin, of an oval shape, and made of granite. As these are generally found near churches, and are supposed to have been used for baptismal fonts, perhaps this may have been brought here from Temple-an-chealhrairaluinn, the church which lies a few hundred yards lower down the hill towards the N. E.

No. 30. Ruin of a Cloghaun, of a similar type to No. 1; part of its roof remains. This is situated on the slope of a hill, a little N. N. E. of "The Doon." Between it and "The Doon" in one of the walls there are the remains of a doorway, but whether it is modern or ancient we could not make out.

No. 31. The ruin of a small circular Cnocán, marked on the Ordnance Map, and called Cloghancalticaunien.

All the Cloghauns in Baila-na-sean are roofless; but there are two such structures on the ridge of the hill, half a mile S. W. of the village called Onaght, which are worthy of special note. The northern and larger of these (*see* Plate VI., fig. *j*) is rectangular, 18 feet long, 14 feet wide, and 10 feet high. It has two doorways, one in the south, and the other in the north wall. The former is larger than the latter, they being respectively 3 feet square, and 2 feet by 2.5 feet: there is also a window, 1 foot square, in the south wall, 3 feet from the ground.

A large portion of the roof over the south doorway has been destroyed.*

A little to the south of the large Cloghaun is the other (*see* Plate VI., figs. *k* and *l*). It is 15 feet long, by 12 feet wide, and 10 feet high, except at the west end, where it is 9 feet high. It also has doorways in the north and south walls; but its window is differently placed to the others, being at the S. W. corner of the chamber. As the foundation for the west wall is a natural shelf of limestone, on the outside the window is nearly level with the ground, but inside it is about three feet

* The old ruins on the Aran Islands are fast disappearing, principally thanks to the rabbit shooters, who pull them down to bolt the rabbits.

above the floor of the cell. No appliances for hanging doors were observed; but perhaps the inhabitants used rush or straw mats, similar to those in use at the present time in the islands of Gorrurna and Lettermullen, on the north of Galway Bay.

As the late Doctor Petrie, in his "Round Towers of Ireland," when describing Cloghaun-a-carriaga (which is still the most perfect Cloghaun on the island) has explained how the Cloghauns are roofed, I need not go farther into details. I would remark, however, that this Cloghaun has two doorways—a fact which that eminent antiquarian seems to have overlooked.

The elevation of none of the Cnocāns could be given, on account of the dilapidated condition in which they now are; but much more might be learned about them, if careful excavations were made around them; as, for instance, those numbered 5, 8, and 29.

Cragballywee (*Anglice*, the Yellow Village of the Rock).—This lies on the S. W. slope of Inishmaan (county of Galway, Sheet 119), the Middle Island of Aran, about half a mile S. W. of Doon-Connor. Here the sites of thirteen Cnocāns and Cloghauns were observed, and a small stone fort, about 60 feet in diameter. Of the Cnocāns and Cloghauns only two were rectangular; all the rest were circular. Only one now rises more than three feet above the foundation, and that is marked on the Ordnance Map, and called Cragballywee: of this only half remains, but what still exists shows a good example of a circular Cloghaun (*see* Plate VI., figs. *m* and *n*). Every particle of the eastern half has been taken away, even to the very foundation, and has been used to build two wing walls to form a shelter for cattle.

OINTIGHS WITH KITCHEN-MIDDENS. On Inishmaan there are Ointighs, close to which are kitchen-middens; these seem to be rather modern, as in them are found coins and brass pins. These heaps are principally formed of the bonnet shell and periwinkle, with occasionally those of the mussel and scallop, along with bones of the cow, sheep, and goose.

One of these Ointigh, marked on the Ordnance Map, and called Ballylinaghaun, lies about 200 yards N. W. of the boreen that leads from Sandhead Lough to the hamlet called Moher. Immediately east of this ruin is an underground chamber; and on the north is a kitchen midden, 12 yards long, by 9 yards wide, and 3 feet high; in this the brass pin No. 1 was found.

West of the ruin called Templesaghtmaree (which to me appear more like the ruins of a house than of a church, as it is divided into three chambers, the centre one of which is a mere passage), there is a large kitchen-midden, in which brass pins are said to have been found, but none of these were forthcoming when I was on the island.

Two hundred yards due north of Doon-Connor there is an Ointigh, with a kitchen-midden attached. In this the brass pin No. 2 was found; and with it a token, a little larger than a farthing; on one side of this coin was "WILSON OF DUBLIN," over a figure of St. George and the Dragon, and under the figure was the date 1672; on the reverse was "ONE HALFPENNY,"

round some sort of trade mark. There is no evidence as to the stratum of the kitchen-midden in which this coin was found, but it shows that the spot was inhabited at the close of the seventeenth century.

The celt Soighead (*pronounced* scythe), *Anglice*, Darthead, marked No. 3, was found by a man while digging in one of the small patches of cultivated ground N. W. of Doon-Connor. It is made of black siliceous limestone, beds of which occur in different places on the island. These Soigheads are said to be very common, but are not easily procured; as the islanders, when they find them, keep them carefully, as they believe that if they lose them they also lose their luck.* Seals were formerly killed in great numbers by the Aranites (*see* O'Flaherty's History of Yar-Connaught); and the Rev. W. Kilbride suggests that the Soigheads were used for skinning the seals and other animals, as they are of too soft a nature to be put to such hard work as hewing wood or breaking stone. A shallow groove in the flat side of the Soighead in which to place the tops of the fingers would seem to confirm this suggestion.

EXPLANATION OF PLATES.

PLATE I., Map of Bail-ana-Sean, Inishmore.

PLATE II., Fig. *a*, The ground plan of a rectangular Cloughaun, or beehive-cell, on a scale of eight feet to one inch.

„ Fig. *c*, The ground plan of a circular Cnocán, or beehive cell, covered with clay, on a scale of eight feet to one inch. Innermost is a circle of flagstones, placed on edge; outside there is a single-faced stone wall, that is backed with clay; and surrounding all is another circle of flagstones.

PLATE III., Fig. *b*, The ground plan of a Fosleac, or cell built of flags, on a scale of eight feet to one inch.

„ Fig. *d*, The ground plan of a rectangular two-chambered Cnocán; scale, eight feet to one inch.

„ Fig. *f*, The ground plan of a two-chambered Fosleac; scale, eight feet to one inch.

PLATE IV. Fig. *e*, The ground plan of a three-chambered Cnocán; scale, eleven feet to one inch. Round each chamber are flags, placed on edge, behind which are single-faced walls, that are backed with clay; at each side of the entrance are flags to keep in the backing.

„ Fig. *h*, Sketch, showing the overlap in the corners of the rectangular Cloughauns and Cnocáns.

PLATE V., Fig. *g*, Ground plan of a ruined Cnocán; scale, eight feet to one inch.

PLATE VI., Figs. *k*, *l*, and *j*, Sketches of rectangular Cloughauns.

„ Figs. *m* and *n*, . . . Sketch and plan of a ruined circular Cloughaun; scale, eight feet to one inch.

* In the county of Mayo, and thereabouts, the natives, when they find these stone hatchets, immediately bury them, as they believe that people who are "fairy struck" receive a blow of this kind of weapon from a Fairy hand.